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MUSIC.

THE THOMAS CONCERTS.

THE concerts at the Central Park Garden this year are better than ever before, and the audiences it seems to us are unprecedentedly large. Indeed the time has come when the difficulty of accommodating the throngs who want to hear the Thomas Orchestra demands very serious attention. It is not long since Mr. Thomas had to perplex his mind in devising schemes to attract his audiences; now his trouble is to find a place big enough to hold them. Originally the Garden was a lounging place for the lovers of tobacco and beer, and the music was a secondary attraction; but of late a furious discussion has broken out in the daily papers over the question of interdicting pipes and cigars, and devoting the concert room entirely to intellectual amusement. It is rather an absurd controversy, but it proves that the concerts have outgrown the Garden, and that, sooner or later, they will break away from the association with the bar-room and refreshment tables. The truth is, there has been a great change in the character of the audiences. The German element is as strong as ever, but it no longer predominates. The place has become a resort for connoisseurs of all classes, and the majority probably hate smoke and shudder at *weiss bier*. The bustle and fragrance of the hall repel them, and they find no repose in the pebbly back-yard, with its Vauxhall boxes, and bowers of colored lights. A few rows of chairs have been set apart for visitors who wish to listen quietly to the music, and loud talking on the reservation is always suppressed; but these seats are so close to the orchestra that the playing cannot be appreciated by their occupants, and the experienced connoisseur seeks rather the hot and costly gallery, and listens as well as he can amid the chatter of voices and the rattling of spoons. Some of these days the comfort of the great and rapidly increasing multitude of cultivated lovers of music will have to be considered. Then the winter-concert hall will cease to be a marvel of discomfort, and the summer saloon will be roomy, well ventilated, cool, and cheerful—opening on one side into a pretty garden, where leaves and flowers take the place of bits of colored glass, and on the other into a well-ordered refreshment room, where ladies and gentlemen may sip their ice-cream in comfort. It will not be too small; it will not be remote. The square bounded by Madison and Fourth avenues and Twenty-sixth and Twenty-seventh streets, where the Harlem and New Haven Railroad depots used to stand, would be an admirable site for such an establishment. Why should not a permanent musical institution be connected with the Garden—an institution supporting not only an orchestra but a chorus, and varying the performance of symphonies and marches with cantatas, light operas, and other works requiring instruments and voices together. Many delightful compositions of this class, which have become standards in Europe, have never been heard in this country, because no manager can devote himself to their production. If we had such an institution, with a man like Thomas for its director, we might hope to hear Schumann's "Paradise and the Peri," or Liszt's "Christus;" and we might have had some of Rubinstein's vocal works, which were promised us on his recent visit to America. Well, we may get such a thing before many years have passed. Mr. Thomas is not only enlarging our experience of good music, but stimulating our appetite for it, and under his influence we are constantly demanding a higher and a higher art. It is certainly a significant fact that, on Thursday evenings, when the programmes are more scientific, and, we may say, more difficult than on other nights, and the price of admission is increased, the attendance is almost always largest. The best work of the orchestra is always the most thoroughly appreciated, and the so-called popular music is not keenly relished. Something has been done to suppress the nuisance of loud talking and laughing, and the conductor and the majority of the audience are evidently agreed that it must be put down by summary measures if mild remonstrance will not suffice. What comical scenes there have been at the conflicts between obstinate Mr. Thomas and a few of his unmannerly visitors! A lady and gentleman, close to the orchestra, annoyed him so persistently one night, that he stopped the performance and said a few words to them, whereat the whole house applauded. On another occasion, he turned to a noisy party, and offered to wait until they were ready to listen. He was conducting the "Midsummer Night's Dream" overture one evening, when certain ladies and gentlemen, in the front seats, grew so boisterous in their laughter and conversation, that the music was inaudible to anybody who sat near them. Suddenly Mr. Thomas gave the signal for a long roll on the drums. The fierce rattle burst in upon the delicate strains of Mendelssohn, and the audience started in amazement—all except the offenders in front; they did not hear it. Still the talking went on; the orchestra, convulsed with laughter, kept at its work as well as it could; and the drummer rattled away with unabated vigor. At last the attention of the whole house was concentrated on these three or four people, and they awoke, after awhile, to the absurdity of the situation. From that time until the close of the performance there was a great calm.

We cannot undertake to mention all the interesting novelties which have been introduced this season. There have been several every week, and Mr. Thomas's resources appear to be inexhaustible. One of the latest of the new things was a symphony by the Norwegian composer, Svendsen, who has a high reputation in Europe, but is little known over here. Svendsen is a young man—not over thirty-three—and was for several years a soldier. He is an accomplished violinist, and has traveled a great deal on the Continent with concert companies. The symphony shows him to be an accomplished composer also. He has formed his taste on classical models, and his scoring exhibits little or no trace of the influence of the modern school. If the work is not striking, it is, at any rate, never dull; and the lighter portions, an *allegro molto* and *allegretto scherzando*, are distinguished for a charming play of graceful and sunny fancies. Probably the symphony will not take a very prominent place in Mr. Thomas's repertory, but it can be heard occasionally with general gratification.

A symphony by Julius Zellner, produced earlier in the summer, we found less attractive. It is a scholarly but uninspired work, of the classical school, and we suppose it will not often be placed upon the programme. Yet Zellner is attracting a great deal of

notice among contemporary musicians, and has recently produced at Vienna a *cyclo* of seven symphonies, under the title of "Melusine." A nocturne of his, which the Thomas Orchestra have played this summer, is really beautiful.

A serenade, by the Hamburg composer, Johannes Brahms, has been more successful, though we believe it has been heard at these concerts only once. Its name is misleading, for its proportions are symphonic, there being no fewer than six movements. It is not indeed a serenade in the modern and familiar sense of that word, but a composition of a kind not unusual with the older masters, who applied the name to chamber compositions of similar dimensions; though Brahms is the first, so far as we know, to give it to a work for full orchestra. The music is appropriately characterized by delicacy and repose, and this gentle meditative spirit, which would have been its greatest charm had it been shorter, is its chief drawback since it is so long. The six movements are an *allegro molto*; a *scherzo* and *trio*; *adagio non troppo*; two minuets; a second *scherzo*; and a *rondo allegro*. The *adagio* is a beautiful and tender conception which impressed every one; the minuets are bright and happy. These struck us as the best parts of a work which deserves very high reputation, and which we should be glad to hear again.

Of all the novelties of the season, however, few have proved more popular than the arrangement for the orchestra of Liszt's "Second Hungarian Rhapsody." It is the work of Karl Müller, and has been excellently done, retaining much of the delicate expression of the original, and adding to it a rich instrumental coloring quite in Liszt's characteristic vein. The subject was not a difficult one for the adapter to handle; it is so brilliant, so vivacious, and so picturesque, that it fits admirably to the work of an orchestra; and it is so superbly played by Mr. Thomas's band that the effect is invariably magnificent. Another novelty, representing the freedom of the modern school, but not colored with its extravagance, is *Normannenfahrt* overture, by Dietrich. The composer is an Oldenburg musician, and a pupil of Rietz and Hauptmann. A selection from Gounod's "Mireille;" a march, by Kiel of Berlin; some dance music by Strauss; a march by Hauschild; the "Raketen" march by Ebert; and the highly popular overture to the Hungarian composer, Erkel's, opera of "Hunyady Laszlo," are among the other pieces played for the first time this season. The new bacchanale from "Tannhäuser" has been played once before, namely at Mr. Thomas's Spring Festival; but it is otherwise a novelty. Two specimens have been given from one of the most promising of the present generation of English musicians—namely, Mr. Arthur Sullivan. His "Overture di Ballo" is an exceedingly graceful, pleasing, and varied work, showing a rich gift of melody, and a very neat style of workmanship. During the early part of the summer it was frequently on the programmes, and was always well received. The "Dance of Nymphs and Reapers," which has also been popular, is a selection from his music to Shakspeare's "Tempest," which has long been held in high repute in England, but we believe has never been heard here.

Of the more or less familiar music played during the season it is not necessary to say much. Beethoven has been well represented by the whole series of "Leonora" overtures, the "Prometheus" music, at least one symphony (the 4th), selections from several others, and the well-known *adagio* from the Septette, arranged for the full band. Of Schumann we have had the Symphony in B No. 1, and the overture to "Genoveva." Of Schubert, the unfinished Symphony in B minor, the "German Dances," etc.; of Bach, the beautiful Air and Gavotte from the Suite in D; of Rubinstein, two movements from the Ocean Symphony; of Mendelssohn, a variety of specimens, including the "Melusine" overture, and selections from the "Midsummer Night's Dream;" of Weber, the "Invitation to the Dance," instrumented by Berlioz, selections from "Preciosa," the overture to "Oberon," etc. Contemporary music has been illustrated by Goldmark's "Sakuntala" overture; Glinka's "Kamarinskaja," a good specimen of Russian art; several pieces of Gounod's; and some interesting compositions by Raff. The Music of the Future has not been very prominent, and of Liszt especially there has been very little. Wagner, however, clearly gains in popularity. Some of his more stirring compositions, such as the "Ritt der Walküren," "Kaiser Marsch," etc., are always received with manifestations of delight; and his "Lohengrin," of which Mr. Thomas has given us a great deal, has taken a strong hold of the popular imagination. As Mr. Strakosch has promised to produce this opera at the Academy of Music next winter, we may look upon Mr. Thomas's performance of these abundant extracts as an excellent preparation for the pleasure before us. A frequent hearing of such thoughtful and intellectual music must of course help in our appreciation of the entire work before us, although "Lohengrin," like all the rest of Wagner's operas, can only be fairly judged when instruments, voices, words, action and scenery are taken together as parts of a well-considered whole. One of the most romantic, picturesque, and poetical of all operas, this is perhaps better suited than any of Wagner's others to the taste of the average audience: yet it is far from representing the latest development of the composer's theories. According to his present conception of the lyric drama, "Lohengrin" and "Tannhäuser" are food for babes. When we have learned to relish this, Mr. Thomas will doubtless give us the strong meat that is meant for grown men.

The Orchestra this season numbers fifty performers. A few changes have been made in its *personnel*, but its efficiency has not been in the least impaired, and its playing is as usual altogether above criticism.

ANOTHER GERMAN BAND.

A military band from Saxony has undertaken a concert tour through parts of the United States, and shortly after its arrival it gave one concert at the Academy of Music, and two or three performances at out-of-door gardens. It was not successful, for it has no great merit, and is easily beaten by such organizations as Dodworth's and Grafulla's.

There is danger, in fact, that the phenomenal success which rewarded some recent visitors to this country has tempted less worthy musicians to a disastrous venture. The French, German, and English bands, which played here last summer, were excellent organizations, but their popularity was largely due to novelty. Inferior bands certainly should not attempt the journey.

ART.

HIRAM POWERS.

A GREAT artist has passed away, after reaching the golden fruition of a busy and successful life, to be deplored by his fellow-men throughout the world of Art. Early on the morning of June 27th, at his handsome villa on the slope of the Poggio Imperiale, in the suburbs of the city of Florence, Italy, Hiram Powers, one of the foremost of American sculptors, died, in the sixty-eighth year of his age. When the lamp of genius is extinguished, there is an increase of darkness which causes sadness in many hearts. Such a lamp, lit in the New World, has gone out in the Old, leaving a shadow to fall over both. To-day, bright, sunny, cheery Florence contains the tombs of three Americans who are loved and honored in their native land—Richard Hildreth, Theodore Parker, and Hiram Powers.

Hiram Powers was born near the then small and pastoral village of Woodstock, Vermont, July 29th, 1805. His father being a poor farmer with a family of nine children, he passed through, in his early days, those hardships and vicissitudes which are so often the sponsors of genius. Weary of the hard life one is obliged to lead on a Vermont farm, the father of the future artist took his family to Ohio, where he soon died, leaving Hiram to his own resources. A hotel waiter, a commercial traveler, he was finally apprenticed to a Cincinnati clockmaker, for he possessed an inventive turn of mind, which, in after years, enabled him to invent many tools and appliances to assist him in his great work. While studying horology, young Powers made the acquaintance of a Prussian artist, who was engaged upon a bust of General Jackson. From him he learned the art of modeling, producing in a short time busts and medallions of marked merit. Changing his clock-making for more congenial employment, he took charge of the wax-figure department of a local museum, where he remained for seven years, acquiring much of that peculiar knowledge of the human form and the plastic art, so valuable to an artist.

In 1835 Hiram Powers visited Washington, employing his time in modeling busts of the great men of that day—Webster, Calhoun, Everett, Van Buren, Adams, and others. Many of those gentlemen became his friends, and, on one occasion, he enjoyed a delightful sojourn at Marshfield, with Daniel Webster. His brief residence at the capital secured him a high reputation; and, through the great generosity of Colonel John S. Preston, of South Carolina, and Nicholas Longworth, of Cincinnati, he was able to sail with his family for Italy in 1837, being then thirty-two years of age. He was welcomed by Mr. Greenough, the pioneer sculptor of America in Italy, who gave him encouragement and a liberal commission. The great Thorwaldsen visited his studio, speaking in high praise of his works. Thus encouraged and surrounded by the numerous art associations of Florence, he gave himself up to sculpture as his life-work. His statue of "Eve" was produced in 1838, taking at once its position as a masterpiece. It is now owned by Mr. W. F. Preston, of South Carolina. The "Greek Slave" followed in 1839, having been made in less than a year! It represented a woman in a position of humiliation and sorrow, but elevated above it by conscious faith, standing perfectly nude in the auction mart, to be sold to a Turkish harem. She was supposed to have been taken from one of the Greek Islands by the Turks in the time of the Greek revolution. The idea for this work of art was obtained from the painting of an English friend, Mr. Seymour Kirkup, which now hangs in the mansion of Earl Dunsannon, Piccadilly, London. "The Greek Slave" was the best-known piece of statuary in the London Exhibition of 1851. At least six repetitions of it have been made in marble. The original is believed to be in the possession of Mr. Corcoran, the banker art-patron of Washington.

The first ideal work by Mr. Powers, a bust of "Ginevra," is in the Longworth collection at Cincinnati. His other famous and later works are "The Fisher Boy," of which three copies in marble have been made; "Il Penseroso," in possession of James Lennox, Esq., of New York; "California," owned by W. B. Astor, Esq., of New York; "Proserpine," a bust; "America," now in the Crystal Palace at Sydenham; portrait statues of Washington and Calhoun, the latter ornamenting Charleston, S. C.; the bronze Webster in the State House grounds at Boston, Mass., and the "Indian Girl—the Last of her Race," as well as the last ideal figure made by the artist, which was completed a few years since. As a portrait sculptor, the late Mr. Powers was pre-eminent. He made many busts for private individuals, for which he received three thousand dollars each, having as many orders from Russians, Englishmen, Italians, and Americans, as he could fill. A bust by Powers is now a choice work of art, like a portrait by Vandyke or Titian. The Grand Duke of Tuscany was so delighted with his bust of the Duchess, he requested the artist to apply to him whenever he wished a service. Mr. Powers asked permission to take a cast of the Venus, which was granted, a very rare thing. His busts of "Ceres" and Washington are in Baltimore; that of Webster is in the Boston Athenæum; the magnificent bust of Edward Everett is in the gallery of Chatsworth, England; and there is a fine bust of Longfellow, full of subtle and delicate traits, at the late artist's new studio, on the hill, outside the Porta Romana—a shrine for all Americans and lovers of art.

Mr. Powers was something above and beyond a mere well-trained sculptor, who has been schooled in all the best academies of Europe to tread in the dreary round of classical art. He possessed, like John Gibson of England, that which no school can give, and if he attempted no great monumental work or group, he knew what flights it was safe for him to essay, and kept within the limits of his genius. He was a self-reliant, positive man, one who possessed accuracy of observation, acuteness of insight, and a delicate manipulation, which was far beyond the power of the compass, or any tools used by rule. He sought character in his work, ignoring the conventional. He was an artist of the naturalistic school as opposed to the classic; he wrought from instinct and the promptings of his genius, regardless of the rules laid down in books. He had a contempt for all forms of affectation, and was a sincere lover of the truth. Such a man has added to the art-treasures of the world, and secured a permanent place among the artists of this generation. He ranks with Story, Greenough, Ball, Ward, and other great American sculptors.